

2/01/2012 CAC Meeting

Present: Jim Satterfield, Lee Brundin, Ron Hvizdak, Bernie Cassidy, Don Clark, Paul Felder, Mike Shepard, Tony Anderson, Chuck Hunt, Lee Anderson, Wally Wilkinson, John Fraley, Jim Williams, Greg Foley, Darrell Coverdell, Rick Komenda, Rox Rodgers, Kari Gabriel, Dan Savage, Roger Diegle, Mike Feldmann, Ben Chappelow, Leo Rosenthal, Jim Vashro, Jerry Smalley, Don Bothwell, and Martha Abbrescia

Dinner and informal discussions with CAC members and alumni

Updates:

- 1. The License Fee Increase presentation is not ready yet.**
- 2. Youth Hunt: Recommendation to cancel Youth elk hunt at this time but keep the deer youth hunt. MEA days is deer only.**
- 3. Lions: Recommendation is to keep the lion hunt the way it is. They are looking into implementing some sort of hybrid situation in R2. Commission meeting is Feb 16th. We have been receiving very good letters from houndsmen.**
- 4. Bears: We've recommended one closure date in all of R1**

Feature presentation: Swan Lake Fisheries Management: Leo Rosenthal, FWP Fisheries Biologist on Swan Lake. Leo will present results from a 3-year project to test methods of non-native lake trout removal.

Swan Valley working group consists of 5 government groups as well as Montana Trout Unlimited. When bull trout were listed in 1998, Swan Lake was the only lake that was left open to fish for bull trout. On March 1st of this year, it becomes catch & release only. Swan Lake is 3200 surface acres.

In 2003, we started seeing them show up in our spring series nets. From 2003 - 2005 started more closely monitoring Swan Lake. 2006 brought in MSU grad student to start compiling data on the bull trout in Swan Lake.

The Plan outlined in the EA:

- 1. Juvenile netting is a 3-week period beginning in late August. Deep water sampling in stratified lake (>60'). Salvageable fish are sent to food bank.**
- 2. Spawner netting: Timing identified from 2007-2009. Large mesh gill nets set along known spawning sites. Mainly done by agency personnel.**
 - a. Evaluation criteria:**
 - i. Total lake trout mortality of at least 50%**
 - ii. Trends in lake trout density, condition, and the length of spawning fish.**
 - iii. Trends in other fish populations (bull trout, etc.)**

3. In the 3 years of removal, we have removed 21,330 lake trout. Bycatch has been relatively low. 4500 lbs of cleaned lake trout donated to local food banks.
4. 2011 REDD counts for bull trout: 30 years of counts, 4th year in row that we've seen declines. 210 redds in index streams in 2011.
5. Kokanee: 21 years of counts. Lowest count on record. Counts have rebounded in the past.

Concluding thoughts: 3 year EA has ended, Lake trout (LT) mortality rate appears to be high, shift in LT length frequency, KOK and BULL show decreasing trend, some indices need more time. New EA being written and exploring funding opportunities. Implications of Lindbergh Lake LT population.

Questions:

1. What were original population estimates? 10,000 fish approximately.
2. How does the data from SWAN compare to that of Yellowstone Lake? Hard to compare. The mortality rates of what we've seen in 3 years of data are off the charts in comparison to Yellowstone Lake.
3. Has anyone given any thought to helping the KOK population in Swan until they get stabilized once again? One problem is that we are still short on KOK eggs and it will be difficult to supplement at this time.
4. Do we lose any recruitment of bull trout in Swan Lake with the fish ladder being closed in the Big Fork Dam?
5. Have you estimated what effects the mortality on the bycatch will have on the red counts? Wade Fredenberg (USFWS) is studying this. It is showing to be significant, perhaps up to 100 redds per year.
6. What are you looking at doing at Swan Lake from here on? What will the next timeframe of the next EA look like? --- Need enough time to answer more questions regarding how to catch more LT with minimizing the bycatch of other species. We want to manage by objective versus manage by activity. The current activity is killing LT BUT...the objective is to improve the bull trout populations.
7. Are there other means for killing off the LT eggs? Is that being looked into? Yes...looking at electrodes that can drag on the bottom of the lake. This technology is still developing but initial results look promising.
8. Would the new EA process involve Holland & Lindbergh? Probably not.

CAC Roundtable: advisors should be prepared to report on issues and pass along advice.

Dan: Wolves...the NF of Flathead quota is interesting as to why it's so low. I think the quota is spot on for that area. Dan feels there is an opportunity to get some questions answered regarding number of wolves vs. number of ungulates for that area.

Kari: Regarding legislation regarding the taking of peregrine eggs for falconry. Has there recently been a change in regulation? Jim Williams will check to find out.

Rick: He had previously run for the legislature. He thought it was very beneficial for the CAC to invite them (candidates) to a meeting to get familiar with issues.

Darrell: Lives in Bigfork and a lot of people are of the opinion that you're never going to solve the problem at Swan Lake with the lake trout. Maybe if the KOK fishery was maintained, perhaps you'd have better public acceptance.

Greg: The headlines regarding FWP wage increases are a pretty hot topic. Montana does deserve to have their employees paid properly however, the way it was done with 19% pay increases to some is problematic. What will the legislative session be like this next time?

Wally: Getting questions regarding the changes to the new deadlines. What is the reason for this? (2) With all the desire to kill LT in this valley, we're destroying our fisheries. I hope that the public will be able to see a gain. Could we physically stop the Tribes from going ahead with netting their half of the lake? --- Please stay engaged in the process.

Mike: Grousing about the lack of animals all over the state.

Paul: regarding public meetings on hunting regulations...Noxon had a good showing at the meeting. Was pleased to hear about some of the comments from the meetings...i.e., youth hunts, etc..... Possibly new legislative items, i.e., add wolf license to sportsman combo, etc.

Don: Hasn't been seeing as many wolf tracks this year as in previous years. Some from Libby will be attending the commission meeting in Helena. Lots of letters have been generated in response to Tabor's letter. Most Libby hunters are in favor of the limited entry hunt for mountain lions.

Bernie: Is it possible that FWP could circulate the proposed legislation to the CAC members? Pay increases seem to be somewhat in response to the lack of securing modest pay raises from the legislature.

Lee: There have been comments on the pay raise. The proposal to extend spring bear season to May 31 is optimistic. Is the Kootenai becoming a catch & release a rumor? No – it's not a rumor. Will there be a moose study in the Libby area at some point?

Don Bothwell: trappers are concerned with ongoing wolf issues. The work on the voluntary trapper ed course is all done.

Invitation to Big Arm: Sheep transplant is taking place on Thursday & Friday. CAC is invited to come.

Next meeting is scheduled for: April 4, 2012